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RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA PRIORITY 4024
RUEHME/AMEMBASSY MEXICO PRIORITY 7119
RUEHZP/AMEMBASSY PANAMA PRIORITY 9343
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C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 006257

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SUBJECT: SENATOR CORNYN'S MEETING WITH COLOMBIAN PRESIDENT
URIBE

Classified By: Ambassador William B. Wood for Reasons 1.4(b&d)

11. (C) Summary. Senator John Cornyn (R-TX) met with President Uribe July 4 to discuss Colombia's counterterrorism and counternarcotics efforts. Uribe thanked Cornyn for his support, and asked for his help in passing the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with Colombia. He said drug eradication must ramp up in order to meet 2006 goals and maintain public support. Uribe and Cornyn also discussed challenges in the region and the three U.S. hostages. Cornyn promised to be as helpful to Colombia as possible in the U.S. Senate. End Summary.

12. (C) On July 4, Senator John Cornyn and the Ambassador met with President Uribe. Acting Vice Foreign Minister Jose Salazar accompanied Uribe. The Senator and Ambassador were accompanied by Senate staffers and Acting polcouns (notetaker). The exchange was friendly and productive. Cornyn congratulated President Uribe on his reelection praising his courage as a leader. Uribe replied that his success is linked to U.S. support for Colombia. He added that increasing destruction of illicit crops and support for the consolidation phase of Plan Colombia is vital to continued success. Uribe was pleased that Cornyn would visit Tolomaida base to see counternarcotics operations first hand.

FTA

13. (C) Uribe told Cornyn he directed his Ministers of Commerce and Agriculture to reach a conclusion on outstanding agricultural issues with USTR by July 7 (negotiators reached an accord July 7). Uribe hoped that the Bush Administration would accept and forward the FTA soon and that Congress would accelerate approval of the agreement. He emphasized that speedy passage would dispel anti-trade sentiments in Colombia and the U.S. Cornyn replied that U.S. elections in November would make it very difficult to get legislation approved before the end of the year. However, Cornyn was confident that the FTA had a good chance of being passed in the first quarter of 2007. Cornyn said his visit to Colombia would be helpful in convincing Senate colleagues to move quickly on the FTA.

Drug Eradication

14. (C) Uribe expressed concern that the interval of return

visits by spray planes to a targeted area was too long, allowing growers to replant. Uribe recognized U.S. counternarcotics efforts but added that there need to be better results in order to maintain public support and U.S. assistance to Colombia. Cornyn agreed and emphasized the need for alternative development for the growers. He added that maintaining bipartisan support for Colombia in the U.S. Congress is essential. Ambassador Wood stressed the need for more assets to achieve our eradication goals. Wood said he and MoD Ospina recently discussed increasing spray targets from 130,000-160,000 hectares. With an additional 40,000 hectares eradicated by hand, the GoC would reach a target of 200,000 hectares of illicit crops destroyed. Wood cautioned that estimates of the total area of drug cultivation in Colombia are imprecise. He emphasized that while eradication operations are effective, the weakness lies in the estimates of drug crops.

Tough Neighborhood

15. (C) Cornyn expressed his concern that as Colombia is more successful in fighting terror and drugs at home, these problems will move to other countries. Uribe said Colombia seeks to maintain good relations with its neighbors in order to prevent the spread of terror and drugs. He said he made a commitment to Ecuador not to eradicate drug crops on the border but is worried by reports of a spike in drug cultivation in the area. Spraying is a neuralgic issue in Ecuador, he explained, with indigenous groups and the GoE claiming glyphosate is harmful. Uribe said the President of Ecuador has been cooperative in pursuing terrorist leaders, so he will not revisit the issue of spraying on the border until after Ecuador's national elections in October.

16. (C) Uribe said he had a good relationship with Peruvian President Toledo and that he would meet with Alan Garcia on July 5. However, reports of new coca cultivation in Peru had him worried. Uribe also wondered how Bolivian President Evo Morales reconciled his policy of tolerating coca cultivation, but not allowing narcotrafficking. Uribe viewed the two goals as incompatible. He lamented Brazil's lack of effectiveness in controlling over flights of drug planes. On Venezuela, Uribe said President Chavez always tells him he doesn't support the guerrillas or the narcos. However, when Uribe raises reports of guerrilla camps in Venezuela, Chavez doesn't take any action. He said the GoC needs better cooperation from Venezuela, especially on overflight of drug planes.

U.S. Hostages

17. (C) Senator Cornyn expressed his appreciation for President Uribe's attempts to recover the three U.S. hostages (Marc Gonsalves, Keith Stansell and Thomas Howes) and said this remains a top priority for the U.S. Uribe reiterated his commitment to include the U.S. hostages in any humanitarian exchange agreement with the FARC.

WOOD